DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 163 467 CS 204 513

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TITLE Literacy through Literature: A Cross-Cultural and Broad-Spectrum Approach to Reading and Writing Facility through Literature.
PUB DATE Mar 78
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the New Jersey Reading Teachers Association Conference (McAfee, New Jersey, March 10-12, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Books; *Composition Skills (Literary); *Creative Writing; Cross Cultural Studies; Elementary Education; Folklore Books; Language Arts; *Language Skills; Literature Appreciation; *Reading Development; World Literature; *Writing Exercises

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the concept of a cross-cultural and broad-spectrum approach to reading and writing that enables children to become involved with literature, encourages them to respond and produce, and motivates them to read and write. It includes sections on epic literature, books that explain natural phenomena and modern/future world phenomena, literary visual and auditory effects, and ways of incorporating images from color patterns and prints. In each instance, the author provides suggestions for reading and writing exercises that allow use of children's imaginations and permit new experiences with literary forms including mythology, science fiction, and poetic forms such as haiku. Specific books are cited as examples of the different kinds of literature for use by children. (TJ)

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ED163467

Paper presented at NJRTA Conference
(Great Gorge, March 10-12, 1978)

and

Program Section #6 "The Sociology of Language Learning and Teaching"--IXth World Congress of Sociology, Uppsala, Sweden

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LITERACY THROUGH LITERATURE:

A CROSS-CULTURAL AND BROAD-SPECTRUM APPROACH TO READING AND WRITING FACILITY THROUGH LITERATURE

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A panel commissioned to examine the fourteen-year drop in average scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) found evidence of a "pervasive" decline in average scores of virtually all groups, including the highest scoring.[1] That a larger percentage of young people going to college is less well equipped for what college has traditionally required in the basic areas of reading and writing might be the case. One response to this situation has been the "back-to basics" movement that advocates a return to uniform drills and exercises based on more traditional pedagogy and a narrowly and rigidly conceived curriculum. Educators, however, need to think of other possibilities in coming to grips with the problem--ways that will enable students to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable and that are more in keeping with our changing society. Approaches must take into consideration the world young people experience, roles to which they are accustomed, nature of the media through which they are conditioned each and every day. Yet obviously the means selected must stretch beyond what youngsters are use to in order to provide the base on which they can build. It must reach beyond the TV world in which they function as "solo" receivers, rather than as the transmitters and producers of ideas. It must extend beyond contem-

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porary hard-rock lyrics and beats.

This paper, therefore, presents the concept of a cross-cultural and broad-spectrum approach that enables children and young people to become involved with literature, encourages them to respond and produce, and motivates them to write and read more sensitively. Ways to free them to read and write through literature are projected.

Experiencing, Adapting, and Creating Epic Literature

When young people are given an opportunity to explore multiple fields of knowledge through the reading of such volumes as Urs Ramseyer's THE ART AND CULTURE OF BALI, J. Hackin's ASIATIC MYTHOLOGY, or James Weigel's MYTHOLOGY (the section "Indian Mythology"), they begin to perceive the interrelationship between the arts and other aspects of culture within the context of a social environment. They become aware of sacrificial rituals, masked dance play, indivisibility of religion and art, ethnology, philosophy, cultural anthropology, and even the highest moral values of a society. Searching through this type of literature, young people also discover models of greatness from Rama, the hero of India found in the epic "Ramayana," to Zal, a legendary hero of the Persian epic.

After reading such epic tales as the "Mahabharata," the "Ramayana," and the "Harivamsa," junior-high and secondary school students enjoy adapting an episode or several episodes of one of these epic tales. They delight in preparing "big book" epics in a style appropriate for children and going down into the grades to share their books with these children for whom the tales have been rewritten. Such translations should retain the elements of human weakness and horror; in other words, the content of the epic tales should not be watered down. The human-

ness and humanity of the hero figure and the excitement and nobility of the tales should still show through. The words, however, need to be chosen carefully in the rewritten versions to make it possible for children to comprehend the tales. This kind of an experience is quite valuable for young people for a number of reasons. (1) It provides an audience-type reading situation that is realistic. (2) It makes students aware of how rich images and deep emotions can be expressed through such means as tone, stress, pitch, pause, and jesture. (3) It requires that these older students think and express in a sensitive and perceptive manner. (4) It also requires that they think and write carefully.

Similarly, in the spirit of the oral tradition, young people enjoy spinning their own contemporary epics modeled after the narrative patterns or cycles of stories clustered around the actions of a single hero.

Explaining Natural Phenomena

An easy-to-read book for fifth and sixth graders is THE SUN IS A GOLDEN EARRING by Natalia Belting (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962). This collection of illustrated myths, which are actually extended metaphors written in free verse, represents many pre-industrial cultures from widely scattered parts of the world. Supernatural explanations of the mysteries of nature not only help the past come alive for youngsters, but they also get them thinking about how primitive peoples explained natural phenomena in terms of their own culture. After being introduced to tne concept of extended metaphor, youngsters enjoy stepping back into the past and creating and illustrating their own "stone age" myths. Examples of actual children's products follow.

One sixth grade girls wrote:

> The stars are twinkling like the sun today because a boy threw some pebbles into the sky one day and the moon now shines on them.

Another student explained night and day in an unusual way:

> A man was worried the sun would die so he made a long ladder to get to the sun. When he got there he decided to put an animal skin over the sun at night time so the sun could rest and in the day time he would allow the sun to shine again.

Still another sixth grade girl expressed a universal idea:

> The sky is an ocean the gods swim in. The sun, moon, and stars are shells in it.

A sixth grade boy vividly expressed a symbolic image:

> Thunder is when the stone shoe of the giant boy in the sky hits earth as he runs around it.

Since myth is a product of a society rather than of a single author, youngsters also gain insights in myth-making by working together in small groups of from six to eight; each group of youngsters creates a society and a culture and then produces myths of the society that might suggest the destiny of humans through the interaction of people and supernatural beings.

The concept of myth-making as continuous and in process today also needs to be considered. Gerald McDermott's ARROW TO THE SUN, a picture-story book myth, can be used as an example of a format for recording present-day myth creations. Groups of youngsters become intrigued with writing down possible present-day myths that might even involve close encounters and rituals..

Explaining Modern/Future World Phenomena

Trend areas in modern/future world phenomena literature provide young people with the opportunity to explore alternative possibilities through the investigation of multiple fields of knowledge. These areas include: (1) humanistic concerns, (2) people up against strange happenings, (3) encounters with the invisible world and concept of prophecy, and (4) terrorism and horror from now and future world perspectives. These trend areas are considered; then ways are projected to free young people to read and write by capitalizing on the thought-provoking concepts and content.

Humanistic Concerns. Science fiction has moved through the technological phase and has begun to deal with humanistic concerns. One such concern focuses on will or will not art survive in the future. In GRAVEN IMAGES: THREE ORIGINAL NOVELLAS OF SCIENCE FICTION by Richard Frede, Charles L. Grant, and Barry N. Malzberg (edited by Eward L. Ferman and Barry N. Malzberg; Thomas Nelson, Inc.), for example, the underground theater, misadventures of a painter, and creations of a time traveler who steps into Beethoven's body are explored. The stories, on the other hand, that Pamela Sargent has edited in BIO-FUTURES (A Vintage Book) depict in an imaginative way the benefits and hazards of biological metamorphosis--e.g., total organ transplantation, test tube reproduction, psychosurgery, cryonics, and cloning.

The concept of war in future worlds is another humanistic concern in modern/future world phenomena literature. A boy and girl are caught amidst the most savage space war in galactic history in George Lucas's STAR WARS: FROM THE ADVENTURES OF LUKE SKYWALKER (A Ballantine Book). How world leaders are confronted with a sophisticated and deadly force of robots in a vacation playground is yet another focus projected in William Rostler's FUTUREWORLD (A Ballantine Book).

Different from the usual time-machine fiction stories of time travel are Robert Silverberg's TRIPS IN TIME: NINE STORIES OF SCIENCE FICTION

(Thomas Nelson, Inc.). People float back and forth along the time stream in ways that enthrall and amaze the reader.

Still another humanistic concern in modern/future world phenomena literature involves women. Women are now finding their place in this literature; sex-roles are changing and stereotypes are shattering in this time-honored male preserve. Pamela Argent has edited a number of books that contain stories written by women about women and their problems in the realm of science fiction--e.g., WOMEN OF WONDER; MORE WOMEN OF WONDER; and THE NEW WOMEN OF WONDER (Vintage Books).

People Up Against Strange Happenings. A second trend area in connection with modern/future world phenomena literature is that authors are beginning to grapple with stories about real people up against strange and spooky occurrences as found in WEIRD STORIES FROM REAL LIFE edited by Marjorie Burns and C. B. Colby's STORIES FROM THE WEIRDEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD (Scholastic's Readers' Choice). Mysterious happenings that witnesses claim to have experienced is a particularly intriguing topic that holds the attention of today's teens.

Encounters with the Invisible World and Concept of Prophecy. A third trend area in the realm of modern/future phenomena literature deals with unusual encounters related to invisible worlds of spirits, ESP, occult, and prophecy. Books that fall into this category include Melvin Berger's THE SUPERNATURAL FROM ESP TO UFO'S (T.Y. Crowell), Marilynne K. Roach's ENCOUNTERS WITH THE INVISIBLE WORLD: BEING TEN TALES OF GHOSTS, WITCHES, & THE DEVIL HIMSELF IN NEW ENGLAND, (T.Y. Crowell), Margaret Ronan's STRANGE UNSOLVED MYSTERIES (Scholastic's Readers' Choice), and I. G. Edmonds' SECOND SIGHT: PEOPLE WHO READ THE FUTURE (Thomas Nelson, Inc.).

Terrorism and Horror from Now and Future World Perspectives. A fourth trend area in modern/future phenomena literature is that of terrorism and horror in both the now and future time frames. Robert A. Liston's TERRORISM (Thomas Nelson, Inc.) presents terrorism as a phenomenon of modern life; Robert A. Heinlein's HAVE SPACESUIT WILL TRAVEL (A Del Rey Book) focuses on terrorism in the form of skyjacking by a monstrous extraterrestrial being, a pnenomenon that might well be possible in future worlds.

That the content and concepts found in these modern/future world trend areas provide young people with substance and ideas out of which they can write is certainly the case. They can write, for example, a skit including the dialogue between sophisticated robots and a painter in the body of Michelangelo or among space soldiers in a future world. They can write behind-the-scene conversation for two researchers or surgeons whose specialty is biological metamorphosis. They can write lead articles or editorials for a newspaper on the topic of close encounters. They can even describe their own close encounters with the invisible or unusual. In a sense, this type of literature provides young people with the opportunity to investigate multiple fields of knowledge and think about alternative possibilities. That the concepts and content free young people to think is evident. That clear and logical thinking are fundamental to reading and writing facility is a certainty.

Expressing through Literary Visual and Auditory Effects

Literary visual and auditory effects can be used to stimulate youngsters and teenagers to write and read in a more sensitive manner. Three such effect areas are considered: (1) responding to literary samplers, (2) drawing from advertising posters, and (3) incorporating images from color patterns and prints.

Responding to Literary Samplers. Various companies such as Miller-Brody Productions and Society for Visual Education, Inc. (SVE) will send upon request and free of charge samplers of their filmstrip and cassette literature programs. The major purpose of the samplers is to make it possible for an educator or librarian to evaluate hours of filmstrips in just a few minutes; brief segments of books and stories demonstrate the approach, content, and quality of the filmstrips and cassettes. The "Scribner/Miller-Brody Sound Filmstrip Sampler" samples fourteen filmstrips/cassettes for such favorites as THE OLD BULLFROG, SONG OF THE SWALLOWS, THE MEANEST SQUIRREL I EVER MET, A WOGGLE OF WITCHES, THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT, HOUSES FROM THE SEA, HOW HIPPO!, and many other picture-story book favorites that attract and hold the attention of youngsters preschool through grade three. The "Newbery Award Sound Filmstrip Sampler," on the other hand, contains excerpts from seventeen Newbery Award Sound Filmstrips based on Newbery award-winning books. The samples include such selections as THE MATCHLOCK GUN and MRS. FRISBY AND THE RATS OF NIMH. The SVE "Time-Saver Filmstrip with Cassette: Children's Stories Cluster" has sections of BELLING THE CAT, THE FISHOOK IN THE SKY, BREMEN TOWN MUSICIANS, THE KING CAT, THE MUFFIN MUNCHER, IN SEARCH OF SAVEOPOTOMAS, KING GRISLY-BEARD, and THE GOOSE-GIRL.

Beyond the major purpose served, however, by the time-saver frames, these selected excerpts have potential for multi-usages in classrooms and media centers. As children and young people experience the visual and auditory effects created by these samples, they enjoy working in small groups of from four to six. Standing around an overhead project and using either overhead projection pencils or Staedtler lumocolor 305 (removable with water) or lumocolor 307 permanent (waterproof) magic-marker type pens, they

enjoy responding and recording their impressions, feelings, and ideas in free form or graffito-like patterns. They also take great delight in recording content and ideas using more structured forms. Acrostic and crossword poetry provide effective frameworks through which subjects can be described or sentiments conveyed. Acrostic poems are poems in which the first letters of each line spell out the subject. Each line describes the subject in some way.

Bull frog,

Ugly--

Looked asleep to

Little deer,

Fat porcupine, hungry heron, and other creatures--

Resting in warm sun although

Old, it felt

Good on its new skin . . . .

Crossword poems, in contrast, resemble crossword puzzles because they are composed of interlocking words. When read from top to bottom and left to right, the interlocking words form a statement, opinion, feeling, or convey the theme of a story viewed and heard.

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    coolie
    h l
   winding
    n
    e
 Y  streets
peOple    h
 U      soldiers
 Narrow   t
 G


 Frightened
rUn   v
      e
      n
     city
      n
      gun
```

Since several overhead projectors can be used at one time, at least one per group, many ideas, perceptions, and feelings are projected simultaneously for all participants and viewers to see. Several students might serve as reactors and synthesizers of the many messages and patterns that flow in rapid succession; their role is to process these data as they are projected on the four classroom walls and report back to the class in the most creative and unique ways possible. Students become totally committed and involved through this type of activity; they also begin to communicate and interact more effectively.

The literature filmstrip/cassette samplers serve the teaching/learning situation in still other ways. Since the stories are not complete, youngsters and young people can compose their own endings for the sections presented or can predict what will happen next for several of the samples and read the actual books to confirm or not confirm their predictions. They can likewise write forcasts in different formats, e.g., point-counterpoint arrangements where children write together or even traveling tales where an entire row of youngsters might add to and develop a book forcast. Young people can write their predictions individually if they so choose and then compete to see whose forcast comes closest to the mark or what actually happens in the book.

Drawing from Advertising Posters. Many of the book advertising posters distributed by publishing companies at various convention exhibit booths can be used to trigger a flow of words and ideas. Those posters that contain characters or creatures engaged in some activity seem to serve best. At the top of an Avon Book poster, for example, is the exclaimation "ZAP!" where the single, long horns of two unicorns strick. A Houghton Mifflin Reading Series poster has a long red banner on which is printed in green READING "is for all the things you are." A plane pulls the banner.

Also included on this particular poster are many people/creatures engaged in unique activities or involved in unusual situations. A little girl stands fishing by a "no fishing" sign, and a fish, as it leaps into the air, blows out word bubbles "please read the sign." A mother bird holds a book FIELD GUIDE TO PEOPLE in one wing and has the other wrapped around her chick. A frog reads a menu and consults with a rabbit. A cook holds a recipe book entitled STONE SOUP; he tastes the soup as he prepares it in a cauldron. A Dial Press poster illustrates an episode in which Rabbit knocks on her own door from the picture-story book WHO'S IN RABBIT'S HOUSE? In this Masai tale Rabbit can't get into her house, for inside is the mysterious Long One. Rabbit's friends are eager to help; Rabbit, however, would prefer that her uninvited guests would leave. Grossman Publishers has a beautiful poster that contains many little creatures in the advertisement of THE BUTTERFLY BALL AND THE GRASSHOPPER'S FEAST. Dell Publishing Company, on the other hand, has released a poster that actually involves youngsters by encouraging them to participate in a game. It suggests "Yearling Books welcome RAGGEDY ANN & ANDY and so do these characters, taken from the pages of Yearling's popular paperbacks. Can you match these characters to their books listed in the yellow column? Next to each title, print the number of the appropriate character. Then check your answers below. The first one is already done for you!" Such posters can be displayed in classrooms and media centers as reading motivators.

Action-packed posters can also be used with children and young people in working with and learning about words. Different word-list categories can be developed on the board by encouraging students to draw from the content and concepts found in the posters. A string of subject noun words, a string of opposite subject noun words, a string of adjectives, a string of opposite adjectives, a string of participles, a string of opposite participles, and finally

a string of transitional noun words can be recorded as students dictate. These words actually become then the "makings" or "ingredients" from which students draw in creating Diamond poems. This form of poetry contains seven lines; it starts and ends with nouns that are opposites. The middle line is the longest and marks the change from one noun to another. Looking at two posters, one junior-high student wrote the following Diamond poem.

Line 1: subject noun (1 word)	War
Line 2: adjectives (2 words)	Hate, Destruction
Line 3: participles (3 words)	Bombing Killing Shooting
Line 4: nouns (4 words)	Noisy Violent----Calm Quiet
Line 5: participles (3 words)	Sharing Helping Caring
Line 6: adjectives (2 words)	Love Friendship
Line 7: noun-opposite of subject (1 word)	Peace

A third way to utilize posters is by letting the content or an idea serve as a story starter. To publicize Rachel Isadora's WILLABY, the Macmillan Publishing Company printed a small-size poster showing the character drawing her own pink crayon story consisting of an animal train with a large sun. As a result of viewing this poster, for example, children might be encouraged to write and illustrate their own pink crayon stories. Similarly, the Dell poster for Alex Haley's ROOTS can provide the content for the creation of work chants that might be recorded and performed by small groups of young people.

Incorporating Images from Color Patterns and Prints.

Youngsters enjoy making thumbprint drawings and figures using a formuli based on a special name in Ed Emberley's GREAT THUMBPRINT DRAWING BOOK (Little, Brown and Company, 1977). Once they have mastered the technique and have experimented with making prints with Alphacolor Brilliants (Weber Costello, Chicago, Ill. 60639), they are ready to write and illustrate their own print-story books. The poem "Thumbprint" by Eve Merriam, a book THIS THUMBPRINT by Ruth Krauss, and still another book FINGERPRINT OWLS AND OTHER FASTASIES by Marjorie P. Katz might help to establish the mood and provoke ideas for writing.

Unusual patterns can be created with drops of food coloring added to water in a Pyrex container placed on an overhead projector. Blowing on the surface of the water causes motion and color mixing. Youngsters enjoy creating Cinquain poems that incorporate some of the images perceived.

title (one word)	LADYBUG
describing title (two words)	with spots
an action (three words)	eating harmful insects
a feeling (four words)	to survive perhaps today.
referring to title (one word)	Phew!

Poems that evolve from this experience can be recorded using manuscript or calligraphy forms on wallpaper strips.

Still other patterns and colorful designs can emerge by using the oriental dry-brush painting technique. A semi-dry brush dabbed with red paint on one side and yellow on the other, for example, produces interesting color streaking effects when applied to black paper. Out of these creations can come beautiful stanza or verse-type Haiku poetry that might serve as the lyrics for a musical score. The 5-7-5 syllable Haiku pattern is repeated over and over again. Two examples follow.

Wet, cold, moving forth
Churning, turning, shifting sea
Burst winter's glory.

Salt and spray and wind
Frosty, biting, choppy sea
Blue, green gray, foamy.

Sand, shells, pebbles, all
Softly, firmly, curving sea
Fish and gulls salute.

Winter's storm, northeast
Summer's heat has long since gone
Seasons bring new life.

Patricia Toole

OUR GARDEN

In our garden lives
Bees buzzing, beetles crunching
Flies, weeds, snakes hissing.

Buzzy bee flying
Honey saving is for me
Nectar for my life.

Tender rose consum'd
Oriental destruction
In shining armor.

So quick and yet still
Bouncing from flower to bud
Darting, hovering.

Looking to ensnarl
Glaring at the hateful plants
Growing like a weed.

Slithering, sliding
Throughout the sun-baked garden
Insects beware--food.

Summary

This paper has presented the concept of a cross-cultural and broad-spectrum approach that enables children and young people to become involved with literature, encourages them to respond and produce, and motivates them to write and read more sensitively. Experiencing, adapting, and creating epic literature; explaining natural phenomena; explaining modern/future world phenomena; and expressing through literary visual and auditory effects are some of the components of an approach that reach beyond the "back-to-basics" movement and even the world children and young people experience each and every day.

Note

[1]ON FURTHER EXAMINATION (Princeton, New Jersey: College Board Publication, August 1977).